

NOVEMBER 27 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

Long readings. Short homily.

The Gospel reading very much is about end times, and as we, in a few days—on this Sunday—will start the first Sunday of Advent, we have these end time readings. And in the Gospel of Luke today, we see a description of Jerusalem falling. And Jerusalem—the falling of Jerusalem—the early Christians would have seen very much as a sign of the end times, that God would be imminent, the second coming of Christ would be imminent.

And Luke was written—the Gospel of Luke, which was written about somewhere between the year 80 and 90—they very much knew about the destruction of Jerusalem and how horrible it was. If one reads Flavius Joseph, who wrote the history of the wars of the Jews, it is—and he describes the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans in detail, and it was just horrible. Shaking. How people got killed, and how people were starved out of the city and so on. And they really saw it as the beginning of the Second Coming, and for good reasons.

In the book of Daniel, again, Daniel deals with the end times. The apocalypse—it's an apocalypse or book of revelations, just like we have the Book of Revelations in the New Testament, and it really deals with how the mystery of God interacts in our human history. How God is there, leading us along in ways which we can't understand.

And Daniel, of course, he's one of the Jewish prisoners, Jewish hired people who is captive in Babylon, and who really has his own prayer life. It's kind of interesting how King Darius, how he

also is actually a quiet believer. Although people have to pray to him, because in those days, a king like him would be considered a god, and you would pray to the king, and he would've been at least equal with God. But Daniel, he's not. He's praying to his own God, our God, the God of the Jews, and that causes a conflict. But how God interjected in Daniel's life, and how Daniel was saved of the lions, and in the same way, how those who accused Daniel eventually were thrown in the lion den, and they were basically demolished by the lions and been taken.

But it's how God interacts in human history, and the same with our psalm today. This is actually of 3 Daniel, the same book, dealing with this, how God always is there in our lives. And today, our psalm is very much about the three men in the furnace—Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael—with the angel of God, singing their praises to God. Singing their praises to God, again, a sign for us how God is in the midst of our troubles. How God, even in the midst—like, we hear about all these destructive wars around us, in the Middle East, the Sudan, and so on. But how God is there, and how God works in ways which are beyond our understanding, how some people are saved by basically—by the skin. How things work in mysterious ways.

And each one of us, I'm sure, when we look back over our life, we can see. We can pick out those God moments that we say, "Wow. This was maybe not an accident. It was God who saved me from this." It can be as simple as having a close encounter on the road, that we just avoided an accident. And as believers, we see how God works in our lives and to be open to it. And that's a thing the book of Daniel, which is really a literary work, and we

should not take it as actual fact—but it is just pointing out how God is at work in our lives.

And today, as we prepare for the Advent season, it is a good time to look at our lives and to say, "How did God save me so many times?" A God who is there all the time, but God works in these little ways. Of course, in the book of Daniel, it's very dramatic, with lions. But it's just to emphasize how God is there for us and to save us, and to be with us, to walk with us right here on earth till our last breath.

Amen.